

Fairhope Public Library



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"Four Score Years"

**The
Fairhope Public Library
Fairhope, Alabama
1894 - 1974**

**Alabama
History**

REF
976.121
FOU

FAIRHOPE PUBLIC LIBRARY

HAVE YOU SEEN OUR FAIRHOPE?

Mary Heath Lee

Have you seen our Fairhope in the springtime of the year?
Have you heard the songbirds with their warblings sweet and clear?
Seen the yellow jasmine clothe the gully's craggy wall,
The woodland starred with dogwood and roses over all?

Have you seen our Fairhope in the summer's golden noon,
When the prophet's vine and figtree yield their luscious boon,
When the bay's eternal water our wooded shore line laves,
Like a new Bethesda bringing healing in its waves?

Have you seen our Fairhope in the autumn turning brown,
As the leaves of stately pines come softly sifting down,
When the fruits of Orient link us to the mystic East,
When the poor among us may yet serve a royal feast?

Have you seen our Fairhope in its winter of content,
With the swaying mosses and the treetops earthward bent?
And the cheerful fireside brings sweet comfort to each heart.
For no northern snow-storm finds with us its counterpart.

Then why not come to Fairhope ere the years go hurrying by,
Where the simple life is gentle and the thinking nobly high?
'Tis the place for soul and body grown weary and oppressed —
You'll find your spirits lifted and activity in rest.

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The Fairhope Public Library Fairhope, Alabama 1894 - 1974

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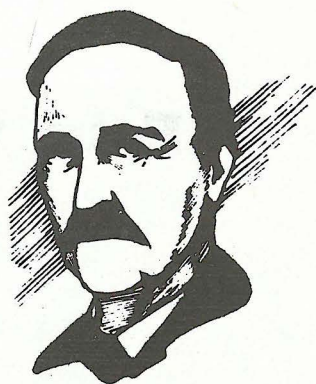
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FAIRHOPE PUBLIC LIBRARY
501 FAIRHOPE AVE.
FAIRHOPE, AL 36532

JUL 19 2016

A Poor Man's Effort

Ernest B. Gaston (1861-1937) once said that Fairhope and the Single Tax Colony had been essentially a poor man's effort. Gaston was of a certainty referring to physical or material wealth. The fact cannot be denied, that the community of Fairhope from the very beginning attracted individuals of the highest intellectual and spiritual wealth and character. Fairhope has fostered an atmosphere of idealistic equality and democracy which let us hope will always be one of Fairhope's charms, a priceless community ingredient felt and appreciated by many people and no attempt made by anyone to analyze it.



Ernest B. Gaston

Books for Pioneers

Less than six months after the first pioneer Single Tax families began grubbing out homesteads from the harsh environment on the Fairhope site, a Single Tax friend, George B. Lang of Seneca, Missouri donated a collection of books for a "Fairhope Free Library". This basic library material brought pleasure and relaxation to the hardy settlers after days of toil and during rainy periods when work outside was not possible.

We can be very proud that our little town has had from the very beginning, one of the finest public libraries in all of Alabama. Even before Mobile had established one of its own this was true, and Mobile, Alabama was ancient history before the Single Taxers ever came to "Stapleton's Pasture" on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay!

Intellectual Atmosphere

Books are a vital necessity to intellectual minds and since Fairhope was founded by persons of unusual mentality it was natural that one of the first Fairhope Single Tax

Colony projects was to develop a community library to meet the needs for pleasure reading, literary reference and research. Very early the colony had to decide which was the most important, school or library facilities? Naturally a school won first priority, in fact, so important was a school in the wilderness existing at that time, a considerable sum of money which had been accumulated in a "library fund", was loaned or diverted to a school building, and it was many years later before the original library fund could be replaced and used as first intended.

The Fairhope Public Library

The story of the Fairhope Public Library began many years before the books were ever placed on the shelves. Many of the original books, now locked away in security cases, came from across the sea, from Amsterdam, Holland and Leipzig, Germany, Paris, France and from Oxford and London, England in the 1850's and 1860's.

Edward Howland (1832 - 1890)

Edward Howland born at Charleston, South Carolina in 1832, and a graduate of Harvard in 1853, was an author in his own right and a lover of fine books and literature. As a professional buyer of fine books for New York antiquarian dealers he travelled abroad and attended many book auctions all over continental Europe. On these buying trips Howland accumulated many fine items for his own personal collection. It was about this time, 1860, Howland and several other intellectuals of the period, among whom was a young writer named Walt Whitman, published for about two years a New York literature magazine, "The Saturday Press". A lack of finances and the beginning of the Civil War ended this literary venture



Edward Howland

and necessitated the sacrifice of some of Howlands most cherished literary treasures.

In 1865 Edward Howland married Mrs. Marie Case, whom he had met in his travels. Marie Case was a woman whose tastes and interests complimented his own and they became a most compatible couple. They first lived in New York City, but eventually they moved to a little farm near Hamonton, New Jersey and established a cozy home in an atmosphere of several thousand choice books. In New Jersey the Howlands experimented with raising fruits and vegetables and became very active in the new agriculture Grange movement.

Intellectual and progressive-minded men and women were attracted to the Howlands, and many persons came from nearby New York City on week-ends to discuss utopian schemes with them. A multiplicity of proposals tending toward a better pastoral life through community co-operation were thought of and talked about. Among the many forward-thinking visitors was one Albert K. Owen who desired to demonstrate the feasibility of his financial theories coupled to community living, and thus developed elaborate plans for establishing a self-help community in Mexico at Topolobampo, Sinaloa. The Howlands, being like-minded with Albert K. Owen, sold their pleasant farm home in New Jersey and joined Owens group.

A Mexican Utopia

The story of the Mexican colony, like so many utopian colonies of that period, which failed to materialize, has been permanently recorded in a book and is available to anyone interested in that phase of the Howlands life.

Edward Howland, already in failing health when he left New Jersey, and no doubt weakened by strenuous pioneer living conditions in the bleak Mexican colony, survived but two years after joining the Sinaloa, Mexico colony. He died December 24, 1890. His widow Marie Howland remained in Sinaloa and edited the tiny newspaper, and being concerned with the intellectual life of the community, set up a library with the Howland collection as a nucleus. When the utopian Mexican colony failed a few years later, Mrs. Howland returned to the United States with her library almost intact.

Fairhope Single Tax Colony

In 1894 having heard of a newly established "Single Tax" colony at Fairhope on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay in Alabama, based on the "Single Tax" theories of Henry George, Marie Howland investigated by mail to her many friends in the United States as well as correspondence with the fledgling colony at Fairhope and the editor of The Fairhope Courier. As a result, in 1899, full of enthusiasm and good will, she came to the embryonic little village of Fairhope, Alabama to make her future home and life.

Marie Howland's experience as a newspaperwoman in both New York and at the Topolobampo, Mexico colony made her a useful editorial assistant to Ernest B. Gaston, a prime mover in the founding of the Fairhope Single Tax Colony and editor of the world-wide circulated newspaper, The Fairhope Courier. Marie Howland contributed "open letters" to the Courier, addressed to friends throughout the universe, telling of her own life and times and Single Tax experiences in this new, undeveloped but rapidly growing and most vigorous little village of Fairhope, Alabama.

"Mrs. Howland's Letters"

After her small cottage had been built among the graceful Fairhope pines, Mrs. Howland's letters dealt with her roses, plants and trees. Being an ambidextrous and out-going individual, independent in thought and action, Marie Howland was equally happy among her friends, or digging in her fruitful garden. She was always present in discussion groups on Sunday afternoons or whenever they occurred in mid-week. She was a prolific writer and her letters in the Courier were always interesting and had a most favorable influence among world-wide readers of The Fairhope Courier, showing the homely as well as the unusual intellectual life to be enjoyed in Fairhope. Somewhere



among her letters appeared an answer to a rather sophisticated person who presumed that Fairhope being such a small village, undoubtedly was a very dull place lacking in culture, places to go and things to do? Mrs. Howland's answer enumerated the multiplicity of events currently being enjoyed by the townspeople, plans for the future and the vast possibilities of entertainment for individuals and groups of persons, in fact, Mrs. Howland lamented the fact that such a variety of events were happening, and so many interesting things were available for enjoyment, no one person could possibly attend them all and at the same time perform necessary household duties!

Fairhope's First Library

When Marie Howland's new home had been completed, she had her library of books removed from storage in Kansas, where they had rested from shipment from Mexico, and shipped to her at Fairhope. Marie Howland had expressed hopes of establishing a small public library in her home and many correspondent friends at a distance contributed generously from their own libraries, in order that they too might share in the library projected for Fairhope. In her letters she recounted with pride the making by friendly neighbors of shelving and furniture to supplement her own bookcases, and as time passed, it was necessary to add yet more shelves and cases, even some on her porch, against the house walls where they were beyond reach of inclement weather.

About the year 1900 the townspeople of Fairhope began to fully utilize the generous library services and the books provided by their pioneer neighborly citizen. Lending books required records and as circulation of the Howland books increased, the demands on Mrs. Howland's personal time became so involved that numerous public-spirited residents recognized the time had come to relieve Mrs. Howland from some of the personal sacrifice she was making in the public interest. So, in 1906 the Fairhope Public Library became truly a public library supported in part by small, voluntary membership fees from interested citizens of the town, mostly lessees on Single Tax land, and in part by community tax funds being collected by the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation.



Marietta L. Johnson

A Pioneer Librarian

Marie Howland's system of conducting a public library could not possibly be used in this day and time, though it did work very smoothly and served quite well as long as she personally had charge. She knew practically every volume in the library and could unerringly lay her hands on any wanted book almost blindfolded. It has been amus-

ingly said that Mrs. Howland used physical size as a basic means of cataloging, in other words the small books were shelved together, and all the larger ones were likewise segregated. A system of letters and numerals were used on the cases and shelves. You would find Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" at "E-3", or Longfellow's poems on shelf 5 in section A. Somewhere in Mrs. Howland's letters to her friends, it was proudly recorded that Mrs. Marietta Johnson, teaching in the public school of Fairhope in 1903, had brought her pupils to the library maintained by Mrs. Howland to acquaint the school children with the adventure and fascination to be derived from an association with good books!

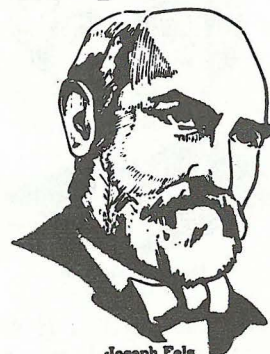
Hurricane of 1906

The collection of books in the embryonic Fairhope Public Library continued to increase in numbers and quality and the fledgling Library Association began to concern itself with plans for more commodious quarters. One of the first suggestions was that an addition should be made to Mrs. Howland's cottage, but on closer study this was considered unsuitable. Then, since the hurricane of 1906 had demolished the building on Section Street which had served for the first school and for a community hall, a new public meeting place seemed to be an urgent need. The public school had already, a year or two previously, been given a new two-room building on what is now the Organic School Campus, but a new community hall was still a necessity. A local architect was appointed to plan

for a combined library and community hall which was proposed to be built on the north side of Fairhope Avenue at Church Street.

Fels Naptha Soap

Mr. Joseph Fels, the wealthy Philadelphia soap manufacturer, and a long-time friend of the Fairhope Single Taxers, had previously given \$1000 toward a library building for the Single Tax colony. At the time Mr. Fels gave this gift to the colony, insufficient funds were available for a two-purpose building, and since it was decided a new school building was more of a necessity to replace the building destroyed by the 1906 hurricane, his gift was used temporarily to provide facilities for a school and the library building plans were held in abeyance.

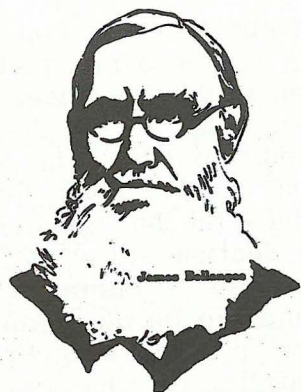


Joseph Fels

The growth of Fairhope village necessitated a new street, so Summit Street was cut through from Fairhope Avenue to Magnolia Avenue including many feet on the West side of Mrs. Howland's beautiful grove of pines, leaving her cottage facing the new extension of North Summit Street, and midway between it and Mrs. How-

land's cottage, a new one-room library structure was built, largely with volunteer labor and materials furnished by community-minded citizens. When the new library building was completed, the books in Mrs. Howland's cottage were transferred and shelved in the new quarters, and in the year 1908 Mrs. Howland generously presented the library to the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation to operate

and hold in trust for the community of Fairhope.



James Bellinger

Marie Howland continued as librarian for another eventful nine years. She was assisted by many eager and willing young school children who loved working with books and the library lady who was always so cheerful and who laughed so easily. Mrs. Howland's health began to fail, she was unable to keep the new library open to the public as she desired, but with limited funds and much volunteer assistance, she managed to be open at least two days a week so that the library books would be available as much as possible.

Lydia J. N. Comings

(1849 - 1946)

As with all growing things, the Fairhope Public Library again ran out of space for its ever increasing collection of books, and in the year 1919, with the aid of the \$1000 gift from Mr. Fels, which had been returned to the library building fund, a larger room, now the central library room, was added, plus an entrance and porch on the front of the building.

Mrs. Lydia J. N. Comings pioneered many of Fairhope's initial cultural advances and it was as the president of the original Library Association for 35 years that she maintained enthusiasm and public interest among the village citizens towards the maintenance and advancement of the finest public library in all of south Alabama. Mrs. Comings succeeded Mrs. Howland as librarian in 1917, and with the assistance of Miss Mary Quarles, she held the position of Fairhope librarian until 1921. She remained as President of the Library Association until 1941.

Mary Heath Lee

In April of 1921 Mrs. Mary Heath Lee became the first regular paid librarian, and she in collaboration with Mrs. Lydia Comings built the library hours from the sparse several hours a week, to an eight hour six days a week! Mrs. Lee was ably assisted by her daughter, Mildred, throughout her nine year tenure. Library patrons of today owe Mary Heath Lee a tremendous debt of gratitude for the high standards of library management she developed in those early days of long hours and scant remuneration

for her labor of love. Mrs. Lee often spoke of how light her library duties seemed and of the great joy she received working with so many and varied volunteer persons who had traveled widely and who had such interesting personalities.



Mary Heath Lee

In those early days of the library, the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation provided the site for the library, the maintenance of the building and a small salary for the librarian. The Town of Fairhope provided utilities and some maintenance of the streets and grounds of the library. Custodial services and occasional new books were sparingly provided by cash from memberships in the Library

Association and by infrequent gifts of material and cash from various civic clubs, receipts from occasional touring lecturers, library benefits and individual public donations.

A Library Funeral

Holding funeral rites in a public library may seem somewhat odd, but it did happen in Fairhope. In the year 1921 Mrs. Marie Howland, founder of the Fairhope Public Library left the scene of her happy labors and a beautiful, simple funeral service in her memory was conducted by Ernest B. Gaston and the Rev. George W. Wood in the library building that had so long been the object of her care and affection. Her mortal remains were consigned to the Fairhope earth she so dearly loved in the Colony cemetery amidst the illustrious dear dead of the past.

After the passing of Marie Howland, the Fairhope Public Library continued its steady growth and in 1924 an extensive addition was built on the southside of the building. A fiction and reading room was joined by an art room, later turned into a crowded museum, and to the east a small office and equally small reference room. This 1924 addition soon became overcrowded and somewhat later the

two small open front porches were enclosed and fitted with shelves for the ever increasing volume of books.

A Pioneer Museum

In the early days of the Single Tax Colony at Fairhope, it was the proud possessor of a museum of sorts, which shared space in the Fairhope Public Library until the building became too crowded for the museum and the overflowing stacks of books. The full, official name of the library at one time was: "The Fairhope Library and Museum Association", and it was by this title the City of Fairhope assumed its operation in 1964.

Many innovations to create interest of school age children in the library were developed by Fairhope librarians of the past, and the library museum proved a wondrous attraction for children until lack of space determined its temporary removal.

Some years ago an arrangement was made between the Fairhope Library officials and the museum at Fort Morgan to house the artifacts from the Fairhope Library Museum temporarily until such a time as Fairhope could find or afford a more permanent and suitable place for the small museum collection then on display at the Fairhope Public Library. As a possible indication of the interest and value of the Fairhope Public Library Museum artifacts, in 1950 the Connecticut Valley Museum of Natural History requested permission from the Library Board to duplicate material in the Fairhope Library Museum!

Now that the City of Daphne, Alabama is planning space for a Baldwin County Museum in its new City Hall Complex, perhaps the Baldwin County Historical Society, which is the foremost county group with a museum interest, can develop plans for utilizing the Fairhope Museum material and artifacts now on loan to the Fort Morgan Museum, and make it more available to the public in a convenient, centrally located Baldwin County area, such as the new Daphne municipal complex?

Professional Librarians

From the time of Mary Heath Lee's incumbency as the librarian more than fifty years ago, the Fairhope Public Library has enjoyed the services of professional librarians.

During the first nine years Mrs. Lee was our librarian she attended library conferences at Signal Mountain, Tennessee, at Birmingham, Alabama and at Biloxi, Mississippi. She also attended a library school conducted by Emory University at Atlanta, Georgia. The Fairhope Library, even in those early days, was a member of the Alabama State Library Association and became an affiliate of the Southeastern Library Association as well. In 1925 the Alabama State Library Association held a meeting in Fairhope celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Fairhope Public Library. That was a wonderful and widely attended celebration. The state library association members were guests for a second meeting in Fairhope in the year 1938.

Seminars in Bookbinding

At the end of 1930 Mrs. Mary Heath Lee's health began to fail. The increasing duties at the library became beyond her lessening strength and at her request she was replaced by Mrs. Martha M. Albers, assisted by Mrs. Bertha Mershon and an increasing number of volunteers. The tempo of library activity began to increase, accession of books doubled and tripled. Mrs. Ellyn Beaty began to teach a volunteer group in updated library methods, and a Mrs. Gilmer from Bay Minette conducted numerous seminars in bookbinding and library book maintenance.

W.P.A. Book and Writer's Program

About the year 1933 the government Works Progress Administration (W. P. A.) subsidized a work program which considerably benefitted our local library. All available working space in the library was given over to the activity of a group of women engaged in rebinding and lettering books and other activities necessary for library maintenance. This W. P. A. Project was still in motion when Mrs. Bertha Mershon became librarian in 1934. The W. P. A. book project became too much of a burden for the librarian to conduct so Miss Mary Bishop was appointed as a assistant to Mrs. Mershon, to manage and direct the W. P. A. Project which continued until 1942 when the government discontinued these projects.

At the conclusion of the W. P. A. book project in 1942,

Miss Mary Bishop continued at the library as a valued aid to Mrs. Mershon until the year 1946, when Mrs. Bertha Mershon resigned as librarian for health reasons.

Miss Mary Bishop assumed the duties of librarian in 1946 and continued in this capacity with Miss Ruth Jeffcott as her assistant until the end of 1947. When Miss Bishop relinquished her duties as librarian it was necessary to bring Mrs. Mary Heath Lee from retirement to again direct the library during the year of 1948 with the dependable Miss Ruth Jeffcott as her capable assistant.

Artist Librarian

For the period 1948 to 1956 Miss Anna Braune became the librarian with Miss Jeffcott still in the position of assistant librarian. One wonders why Miss Jeffcott with more than a decade of Fairhope library service, never became the principal librarian? Miss Jeffcott, now Mrs. Jacob Teikari, and who is a Fairhope resident, answered this query by saying, in the early days of the library she was considered too youthful for the responsible position, and further, in spite of her long library experience, she did not possess college credits as a librarian.

A Fabulous Book Circulation

From 1957 until 1972 Mrs. Roland P. Carr, a native of Iowa and a summer resident in New Hampshire was librarian with a number of assistants, principally Mrs. Joyce Antinarella, a native of Maryland, from 1964 until 1971 when Mrs. Antinarella resigned to become associated with a local bank. The growth of the Fairhope Library during the period of Mrs. Carr's tenure as director were years of steady progress and seemingly unspectacular activity, however during the time she was librarian the circulation grew from what was considered a fabulous figure, 15,000 volumes a year, to a dizzying peak of nearly 70,000! And this in a town of 6000 population! This library book circulation is triple to that of any other town in Alabama with a 1970 census population comparable to Fairhope!

A Community Project

The public library in Fairhope has always been a community project. Quietly and with little fanfare the citizens have striven towards the very best library possible. Individuals have donated books, personal services and have shared their meagre finances. Garden Clubs have made the library grounds into a continuing demonstration of their skill and love of plants, shrubs, trees and grasses. Fairhope Civic Clubs and organizations have generously provided the library with many permanent assets which are a joy and pleasure to the community and to library patrons.

Artistic Enviroment

The Single Tax Colony at Fairhope has from the very beginning, been overly blessed with artists in every medium of expression. The multitude of artists, writers and intellectuals have constantly discovered and encouraged latent talent in our young people by providing the library with books and examples of arts and crafts. No wonder Fairhope today has an art center, school and art colony that would do credit to a city of 100,000 population! The members of the Eastern Shore Art Association are providing an ever increasing number of books and periodicals on the arts and crafts to the shelves of our Fairhope Public Library and these books and materials on the arts and crafts in turn are further developing the artistic consciousness of our community.

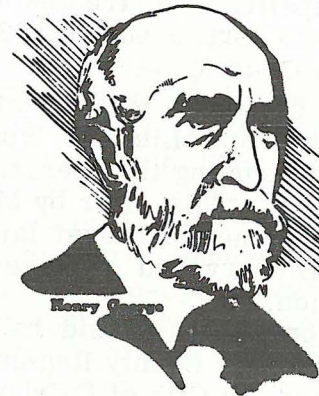
Interesting Sculpture

As an example of early artistic influence in Fairhope, there is a cozy fireplace in the Special Collections room at the library, and in the mantle of the fireplace is recessed a plaster cast of the famed "Pied Piper", a high relief panel modeled by Geneva Mercer while she was an art student in Florence, Italy in 1917. This sculpture was the pride and joy of local artists at the time it was placed in the library chimney about 1925, and apparently it was the inspiration for numerous other ceramic plaques built into Fairhope homes of that era. Geneva Mercer was a

native of Jefferson County, Alabama and a protege of Julia Tutwiler of Livingston, Alabama.

Henry George

Another older but interesting sculpture at the library is a bas-relief portrait of Henry George placed above a closed-up doorway in what is now the office of the library. From the location of this portrait of Henry George, it may



have been over the main doorway to the first library built in Fairhope.

For some unknown reason this bas-relief was covered with paint when the adjoining walls were re-decorated in the past, and one has to look closely to see the hidden portrait. It is hoped that the architect for the newer library additions now contemplated will endeavor to save this artifact of pioneer

Fairhope days and incorporate it into the building in a suitable spot where it may again be viewed.

A Complete Renovation

In 1951 during the library administration of Miss Anna Braune, the Single Tax Corporation approved and paid for the addition of a much needed large new room to the library, and while this improvement was underway, it was decided to re-roof the entire library building, install natural gas heating and additional new electrical lighting. The interior of the library was freshened with an attractive paint job, and to complete the renovation, the exterior of the library was repaired and repainted. Marmaduke Dyson personally supervised the construction and re-decoration of the building at that time.

A Labor of Thoughtfulness

In 1959 Oliver M. Rockwell and Marvin Nichols seeing the need, planned and installed much needed new lighting

equipment in the library. Their personal time, labor and craftsmanship was a much appreciated gift to the library and the Single Tax colony generously supplied the necessary electrical materials for wiring and the fixtures required for the project.

Municipal Operation of the Library

The first recorded advocacy that the Fairhope Public Library be financed by the municipality as a trustee for the entire Fairhope community was proposed in 1923, and was politely declined by the City Council.

Again in 1932, Axel Josephson proposed the gift of a large addition of books to the Fairhope Library, contingent upon the Town of Fairhope assuming the operation and adequate support of the library. This offer by Mr. Josephson was also declined by the council, however later records indicate the Fairhope Library did receive a "Lucia Josephson Memorial Collection."

Again in 1961, combined with the proposal of a considerable number of Fairhope citizens for a Baldwin County Regional Library Association, it was suggested the City of Fairhope assume the public library operation, particularly since statistics indicated a minority of Single Tax land lessees were providing public library service for a majority of library patrons living on deeded land and in no way supporting the library institution with taxes or contributions. The late Charles A. Kinney was an indefatigable proponent of the City of Fairhope providing the community with library service and possibly his one-man campaign of several years extent had the effect he strived so hard to attain.

Memorial Bequests

Throughout the years numerous small outright gifts of money have been given the library by individuals and civic organizations. These monetary gifts have provided the library with a means to purchase small necessities not otherwise available or provided for in the skimpy budget. One rather large and appropriate memorial bequest came in the year 1934 from the Elizabeth Whitehead Estate of Los Angeles, California. This bequest was deposited in an interest-bearing trust fund for the library, and the

yearly interest on the principal provide continuing small sums of cash for emergencies for many years until it was determined the principal sum would be of more advantage if used in one of the many additions made to the premises.

Baldwin County Regional Library Association

During the period 1959 through 1961, considerable research and educational publicity was generated towards the establishment of a Baldwin County Regional Library Association with the public libraries of Bay Minette, Robertsedale, Foley and Fairhope as a nucleus. Prominent among the Fairhope sponsors of this proposal were: Dr. C. A. Gaston, Charles A. Kinney, Marvin Nichols, Olive W. Gaston, Dr. Raymond Lambert and Lillian B. Totten. A principal inducement for organizing the local libraries into a co-operative county unit was the possibility of securing government assistance to the impoverished finances of the several individual local libraries. Fear of government interference in the Single Tax operation of the Fairhope Library in particular, defeated the county regional library movement in Fairhope at that time.

A Significant Event

A most significant event occurred in 1964. The Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, after more than fifty years of providing public library service to the entire community, regardless of whether the patrons were lessees on Single Tax land or not, relinquished the Colony Library to the City of Fairhope on May 1, 1964.

This unselfish action by the Single Tax Corporation was taken in order that a more equitable distribution of financing the public library could be attained, rather than have a minority of Fairhope citizens financing this valuable community heritage.

War-Time and Depression Years

During the last decade in the history of the Fairhope Public Library, nothing startling or outstanding has happened other than the takeover of management and

financing by the City of Fairhope. Library service increased and according to numerous newspaper scrap-books filled with clippings, there are hundreds of records of volunteer library workers, far too many names to be listed in this account. It would make a tremendously interesting document if someone would compile an alphabetical listing of all the names of volunteer workers and donors of gifts to the library. As stated above, these names are all permanently recorded in the scrap-books at the library and it would only take time and a tedious scrutiny to develop such a listing. The volunteer efforts of so many dedicated persons could never have been profitably utilized, had it not been for the planning and direction given their exertions by enthusiastic and beloved library officials and librarians, more often than not, working under difficult and adverse war-time and depression year conditions of meagre finances and material shortages.

Credit Where Credit is Due

No account of the early days of the Fairhope Public Library would be complete without a recording of the names of those unselfish individuals who devoted personal time and energies to forwarding the permanency of a community institution that has enriched all of our lives.

We are indebted to Dr. C. A. Gaston for his painstaking research and compilation of the following list of library pioneers, from the official minutes of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation from the year 1899 until 1964, at which time the public library management became a function of the City of Fairhope.

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| James Bellangee | Frank L. Brown | Nanthaniel |
| Marie Howland | Rev. F. L. Higgins | Mershon |
| Ernest B. Gaston | Clarence L. | G. M. Bancroft |
| Joseph Fels | Mershon | W. L. Price |
| Carrie P. Sykes | Margaret Dyson | James S. Paton |
| William Stimpson | N. M. Cope | Arthur K. |
| Della K. Bancroft | A. N. Whittier | Trenholme |
| Mrs. R. F. Powell | Mrs. F. L. Brown | Mary Heath Lee |
| Lydia J. N. | E. C. Wolcott | George M. Pilcher |
| Comings | William Call | C. E. Littlefield |
| F. W. Rose | | N. O. Nelson |

Axel G. S.
Josephson
Lenore M. Wolcott
Dr. C. A. Gaston
Kirby Wharton
Reuben L.
Rockwell
Emil Knips
Mary Quarles
J. Francis Lemon
Mrs. E. J. Roberts

Chinta Andrews
Marmaduke Dyson
Axil Johnson
Bertha Mershon
Marvin Nichols
Helen Dyson
Charles A. Kinney
Olive W. Gaston
Lillian B. Totten
Dr. Raymond
Lambert

Sam Dyson
Claude W. Arnold
Ralph Brown
Oliver Rockwell
James Gaston, Jr.
Mildred Lee
Martha M. Albers
Mary Bishop
(Gulledge)
Anna Braune
Ruth Jeffcott

April 9, 1906

The Fairhope Library Association Roster of Members

Mrs. Marie
Howland
J. M. Pilcher
H. S. Comings
Lydia J. N.
Comings
Archibald Crosby
Mrs. P. S. M.
Unger
Mrs. Isabelle
Schindler
George Knowles
Townsend P. Lyon
Arthur K.
Trenholme
Mrs. C. E.
Littlefield
Charles A.
Brothers
Miss Daisy
Caldwell
J. F. Johnson
Mrs. J. F. Johnson
W. S. Sumner
Mrs. W. S. Sumner

Dr. Clara
Atkinson
Mrs. Clara White
Alice Herring
Christopher
Mrs. E. G.
Dougherty
Mrs. R. F. Powell
Mrs. A. Swift
E. L. Williams
R. F. Powell
F. W. Rose
Miss Frances H.
Lyon
Dr. W. H. Rowe
Marmaduke Dyson
Arthur H.
Mershon
Mrs. A. H.
Mershon
Miss Nan Clements
Mrs. Lenora
Curtis
George M.
Bancroft

W. J. Gelink
William H. Zepp
Mrs. Frances W.
Riley
Mrs. H. F. Ring
Mrs. Ila W.
Coutant
Miss E. Weaver
Bell
Mrs. E. W. Farnell
J. A. Patterson
A. R. Howarth
William L. Heller
W. E. Sweet
Mrs. W. E. Sweet
Mrs. M. E. Bemis
Alex J. Melville
William Stimpson
Ernest B. Gaston
James S. Paton
Frank L. Brown
Minnie Brown
Alfred J. Wolf
James Bellangee
Miss Grace Manley

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| W. H. Dorchester | Mrs. W. W. Kile | Mrs. A. G. |
| C. E. Littlefield | A. C. Staples | Vredenburg |
| Miss Mary Gooding | Mrs. L. C. | F. L. Horning |
| Miss Helen Taggart | Freeman | W. Grey |
| Rev. F. L. Higgins | Miss Altoona A. Chapman | Miss Clarissa Walker |
| Mrs. F. L. Higgins | P. Y. Albright | Mrs. de Coudres |

Fairhope Library Association*

April 9, 1906 - to 1962

| | |
|---|------|
| Lydia J. N. Comings, President (for 35 years) | 1906 |
| Marie Howland, Vice-President (for 13 years) | 1906 |
| F. W. Rose, Secretary | 1906 |
| James S. Paton, Treasurer | 1906 |
| William L. Heller, Secretary | 1907 |
| Arthur K. Trenholme, Secretary | 1908 |
| Alex J. Melville, Secretary | 1909 |
| Ernest B. Gaston, Secretary | 1911 |
| Nathaniel Mershon, Treasurer | 1911 |
| Mary Heath Lee, Treasurer | 1915 |
| Mrs. L. S. Cravath, Secretary | 1917 |
| Mary Quarles, Secretary | 1919 |
| Emma L. Wood, Vice-President | 1919 |
| Captain J. R. Cross, Vice-President (for 18 years) | 1914 |
| Mrs. L. J. Bahls, Treasurer | 1922 |
| Tess S. McCall, Treasurer | 1923 |
| Marie L. Mask, Treasurer | 1925 |
| Alice C. Bryan, Treasurer | 1927 |
| Mrs. George B. Fuller, Sr., Secretary (for 14 years) | 1927 |
| Lenore M. Wolcott, Treasurer | 1929 |
| L. O. Bishop, Board Member (for 10 years) | |
| Olive W. Gaston, President (for 6 years) | 1941 |
| Chinta Andrews, President | 1948 |

*Fairhope Library
Board after May
1962.

Officials and Members of The Board

Who Served at Intermittant Periods

1924 - 1925

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Ellyn B. Beaty | Mamie R. McNulty | Edith C. Bennett |
| Mrs. E.G. Connolly | Dr. C. A. Gaston | Clara A. Stewart |
| Mrs. P. A. Grassfield | Kirby Wharton | Margaret Dyson |
| Hazele W. Payne | Mildred Roberts | E. C. Wolcott |
| Helen Dyson | (Mrs. E. J.) | Marvin Nichols |
| | Mrs. Ronald Mershon | Lillian B. Totten |

Howland Memorial Window

1924 - 1925

Donors of the Memorial Window to Edward and Marie Howland in the South Wing of the Fairhope Public Library.

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Ernest B. Gaston | Marietta L. Johnson | Emma G. Minnich |
| Kirby Wharton | H. P. Kamper | Miss Emma Schramm |
| Earnest Ebel | Lyndon Wheeler | Mrs. John Emery |
| Clara Mooreman | Townsend P. Lyon | McLean |
| Mr. & Mrs. Louis Prang | Etta K. LaPierre | Mrs. M. E. Bemis |
| F. H. Brown, Jr. | Mrs. A. C. Brown | Ralph L. Brown |
| Mrs. Minnie Brown | Carrie E. Willy | Mrs. F. L. Higgins |
| Mrs. Van Horne | J. A. Patterson | Mr. Milton V. Watros |
| | Lydia J. N. Comings | Mary Heath Lee |

The Margaret Dyson Memorial Fund

(Mrs. Marmaduke Dyson)

(1875 - 1962)

Donors

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Helen Call | Arthur F. Gaston | Lucian T. Wilcox |
| Mary Gaston | Frances G. Crawford | Mrs. Joe Schneider |
| Joe Schneider | Mrs. Daphne Anderson | Dr. W. F. Gessler |
| Mrs. W. F. Gessler | Ralph H. Brown | Bart Jennings, Jr. |
| Beverly Jennings | Howard Ruge | C. O. Christianson |
| Esther Ruge | Lillian B. Totten | Mrs. C. O. Christianson |
| John S. Huffman | | |
| Ida Wilcox | | |

Pensacola, Florida Friends

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Mrs. E. E. Conn | Harry Huelsbeck | Mrs. William |
| W. H. Schroder | Inez Huelsbeck | Randolph III |
| R. N. Heath | Dave Johnson | Wm. R. F. Morris |
| Charles P. | Elenor Woodbury | Admiral J. W. |
| Woodbury | S. L. Davis | Reeves, Jr. |
| Kenneth Fulghum | William H. | Mrs. S. L. Davis |
| Margaret C. Bunnel | Randolph III | |

Other Out of Town Friends

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| A. A. Corte | Clyde Draughton | Miss Rita Dyson |
| (Loxley) | (Mobile) | (Chicago) |
| Miss Mary Dyson | W. E. Akridge Jr. | |
| (Chicago) | (Mobile) | |

"Let Not Your Left Hand . . ."

Names and dates used by the author in this monograph are recorded in various official and authentic library documents. Some names of persons absent from records, but who have been, and are, an inspiration to library officials, are listed here as those whom the writer is personally aware of, and who should have recognition for contributions to the success of the Fairhope Public Library.

Many generous, self-effacing donors of gifts and services to the Fairhope Public Library have been quite successful in their desire to remain anonymous. Their names, gifts and good deeds are not readily available in library historical records, and too many of these library partisans may never be known. The compiler of the present historical material has not the means or research time to identify them, and unless someone divulges their anonymity and deeds in a future document, they may forever remain unsung.

Of these we do sing . . .

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Iris Meinema | Marion E. (Mike) | Mrs. C. C. |
| Mrs. Helen Taylor | Blake | Kendrick |
| Mrs. C. O. | Reuben L. | Mrs. Lewis C. |
| Christianson | Rockwell | Chapman |
| Mrs. Baker | Clara Damerow | Edna Damerow |
| Brownell | Joseph Barger | Ann LaCoste |

Joe Schneider
Miss Mary Martin
Madge Hjellum
Charles Peavy
Martha Nichols
Helena Vinci
Edith Harwell

Helenbell
Rockwell
Fiske Warren
Georgiana T. Ives
Frances Durham
Mabel Sandt
Alexis Ferm

Frances G.
Crawford
Mrs. Marmaduke
Dyson
Julia Fink
Elof Tuveson
William Woodruff

Fairhope Public Library Personnel

1900 - 1974

- 1900 - 1917 — Mrs. Marie Howland, Librarian
Miss Laura Bernhardt, Assistant
- 1917 - 1921 — Mrs. Lydia J. N. Comings, Librarian
Miss Mary Quarles, Assistant
- 1921 - 1930 — Mrs. Mary Heath Lee, Librarian
Miss Mildred Lee, Assistant
- 1930 - 1934 — Mrs. Martha Albers, Librarian
Mrs. Bertha B. Mershon, Assistant
- 1934 - 1946 — Mrs. Bertha B. Mershon, Librarian
Various assistants
- 1946 - 1947 — Mary Bishop (Gulledge), Librarian
Miss Ruth Jeffcott, Assistant
- 1948 — Mrs. Mary Heath Lee, Librarian *
Miss Ruth Jeffcott, Assistant
- 1948 - 1956 — Miss Anna Braune, Librarian
Miss Ruth Jeffcott, Assistant
- 1957 - 1972 — Mrs. Roland P. Carr, Librarian
Mrs. Joyce Antinarella, Assistant
- 1972 — Charles T. Cromwell, Librarian
Various assistants
- 1972 - to present — Mrs. Frances Black, Director
Donna Soto, Assistant

Librarians during intermittent periods

- * Mary Heath Lee - also parts of 1947, 1949, 1950
- Esther Frederick Mrs. Nolan Shappley Mrs. G. E. Irons
- Hazele W. Payne Iris Meinema Mrs. R. H. Walter
- Marie L. Peck Nancy Causey Helen Carvey

Fairhope Public Library

Book Circulation

1900 - 1973

Book circulation figures include fiction, non-fiction and juvenile only. A considerable magazine and music circulation is not included in these figures. In several instances it was not possible to verify figures, these are indicated by an asterisk *.

| | | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1900 - 260 | 1918 - 5,600 | 1937 - 13,642 | 1956 - 15,722 |
| 1901 - 317 | 1919 - 5,545 | 1938 - 13,878 | 1957 - 15,289 |
| 1902 - 593 | 1920 - 7,067 | 1939 - 10,614 | 1958 - 17,052 |
| 1903 - 675 | 1921 - 6,898 | 1940 - 7,957 | 1959 - 20,363 |
| 1904 - 693 | 1922 - 7,691 | 1941 - 9,310 | 1960 - 26,000 |
| 1905 - 1,221 | 1923 - 8,095 | 1942 - 10,266 | 1961 - 27,854 |
| 1906 - 1,010 | 1924 - 7,786 | 1943 - 8,268 | 1962 - 36,454* |
| 1907 - 1,218 | 1925 - 9,755 | 1944 - 7,205 | 1963 - 42,984* |
| 1908 - 1,080 | 1926 - 12,741 | 1945 - 8,128 | 1964 - 49,721 |
| 1909 - 1,419 | 1927 - 11,963 | 1946 - 9,631 | 1965 - 50,431 |
| 1910 - 1,586 | 1928 - 11,815 | 1947 - 8,998* | 1966 - 59,858 |
| 1911 - 1,811 | 1929 - 13,399 | 1948 - 8,697* | 1967 - 64,830 |
| 1912 - 2,157 | 1930 - 17,552 | 1949 - 8,448 | 1968 - 66,042 |
| 1913 - 2,916 | 1931 - 20,857 | 1950 - 9,245 | 1969 - 66,054 |
| 1914 - 5,522 | 1932 - 22,653 | 1951 - 12,014 | 1970 - 69,404* |
| 1915 - 5,000 | 1933 - 21,494 | 1952 - 14,143 | 1971 - 72,736 |
| 1916 - 3,690 | 1934 - 19,343 | 1953 - 16,870 | 1972 - 70,000 |
| 1917 - 4,475 | 1935 - 13,955 | 1954 - 17,614 | 1973 - 74,472 |
| | 1936 - 15,637 | 1955 - 16,126 | |

"A City-County Library"

Today the Fairhope Public Library is an integral part of the City of Fairhope, Alabama, one of the City Departments serving the citizens. The Fairhope Public Library Board is provided with an annual operating budget for library salaries and maintenance the same as are all other City Departments. The Fairhope Public Library is supported by City of Fairhope tax revenues, collected from each tax-paying citizen. The Fairhope Public Library is also a unit of the Baldwin County Library System, and as such,

it derives some financing from county-wide taxation.

This has not always been the case. At one time the Fairhope Public Library was supported almost entirely from finances supplied by the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, even though the library was free to anyone living in Baldwin County. In fact, near the end of the regime of major support by the Single Tax Colony in 1967, nearly 60% of the patrons of the library lived on lands other than "colony land", and made no tax contributions towards financing the public library!

"A Friend In Need . . ."

Many public institutions are dependent upon the generosity of its patrons for physical and financial support, and the Fairhope Public Library has been no exception. Almost from the beginning the fortunes of the Fairhope Public Library have prospered and waned according to the prosperity of the citizens of the community. During depressions and hard times, the library suffered from a lack of income and had to curtail many of its vital services and activities.

And so, in 1959, during one of these periods of financial stress for the library, a group of interested patrons organized themselves into a working unit with the objective of alleviating some of the monetary and physical difficulties of the library with business-like methods and procedures. Thus was formed the first "Friends of The Fairhope Public Library", with Mrs. Gay Caffee as the organizing chairman. The objectives of the "Friends" were heartily endorsed by the official Library Board on March 12, 1959, and by November 5, 1959, the "Friends" were fully organized with the following officials:

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mrs. Ronald B. Mershon | Chairman |
| Esther Frederick | Co-Chairman |
| Mrs. Earl McCoy | Secretary-Treasurer |
| Mrs. Elsa Lundgren | Asst. Secretary-Treasurer |

A Committee to prepare a Constitution and By-Laws was appointed as follows:

Mrs. J. E. Gaston (Olive), Sr.
Mr. Julius King
Mr. Alexis Ferm

13/2/54 Direct 7-16 6.95

The "Friends" of The Fairhope Public Library, as first activated in 1959 performed smoothly and attained the greater part of its original objectives. In 1972 it was determined that the "Friends" could be even more effective, by amending its written Constitution so that donors of finances might have the privilege of "writing-off" contributions to the non-profit work being accomplished by the "Friends". The U. S. Internal Revenue Service approved this change in the Constitution of "The Friends of The Fairhope Public Library", and thus donations to the "Friends" became tax deductible.

Officials of "The Friends" at the time of this amendment to the Constitution in 1972 and 1973, were:

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Mrs. Paul Shine | President |
| Truman Smith | Vice-President |
| Mrs. John Fugard III | Secretary |
| Robert Feathers | Treasurer |

Executive Board

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| John Riesenfeld | Mrs. Ernest Bailey |
| Lloyd Taylor | Mrs. Raymond Schwab |

The "Friends" of The Fairhope Public Library have proven to be friends indeed, and the many organized activities and events sponsored by the "Friends" have culminated in very substantial financial gifts to the library, making available numerous physical assets, which otherwise might not have been possible. One of the most popular activities of the "Friends", has been the annual "Book Fair" conducted each spring during the Arts and Crafts Tour in Fairhope. Louise and Richard Shimer, with many working assistants have developed the "Book Fair" into a profitable library project and at the same time have provided a means for the library to dispose of old duplicate and excess books, as well as accumulated books that were specially given the library for the Book Fair sales, thus gaining much needed shelf space at the library.

The 1974 "Friends" of The Library officials are:

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Mrs. Emily Monley | President |
| Dom Soto | Vice-President |
| Mrs. Melinda Wolchina | Secretary |
| Edward Sintz | Treasurer |

The following are members of the 1974 Executive Board of "The Friends of The Fairhope Public Library":

Mary Cameron East
John Riesenfeld
Margot Wickersham

Growing in Grace and Service

Rewarding years are ahead for the Fairhope Public Library. The City of Fairhope has had several years experience in budgeting and financing a public library. City officials and employees are sympathetic and increasingly aware of the value of this community asset with which we have been so richly endowed by the pioneer founders of Fairhope and the Fairhope Single Tax Colony, and with the future assistance of the Fairhope City Library Board and "The Friends of The Library", this institution built by thoughtful minds, loving hearts and ever willing workers, cannot help but grow in grace and community service.

| INDEX ENTRY | Page | INDEX ENTRY | Page |
|---|----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Akridge, W. E., Jr. | 22 | Case, Marie | 4 |
| Alabama Library Ass'n. | 12 | Causey, Nancy | 23 |
| Albers, Martha M. | 12, 19, 23 | Chapman, Altoona A. | 20 |
| Albright, P. Y. | 20 | Chapman, Mrs. Lewis C. | 22 |
| Amsterdam, Holland | 3 | Charleston, South Carolina | 3 |
| Anderson, Daphne Brown | 21 | Christianson, C. O. | 21 |
| Andrews, Chinta | 19, 20 | Christianson, Mrs. C. O. | 21, 22 |
| Anniversary, Twenty-Fifth | 12 | Christopher, Alice Herring | 19 |
| Antinarella, Joyce | 13, 23 | Circulation Figures (Yearly) | 13, 24 |
| Arnold, Claude W. | 19 | City Council, Fairhope, Ala. | Cover, 16 |
| Art Center | 14 | City-County Library | 24 |
| Artists | 13, 14 | City of Fairhope, Alabama | Cover, 10, 11 |
| Artistic Environment | 14 | | 16, 18, 24, 27 |
| Atkinson, Dr. Clara | 19 | Civic Clubs | 14 |
| Atlanta, Georgia | 12 | Civil War | 3 |
| | | Clements, Miss Nan | 19 |
| Bahls, Mrs. L. J. | 20 | Colony Cemetery | 10 |
| Bailey, Mrs. Ernest | 26 | Comings, Lydia J. N. | |
| Baldwin County Historical Society | 11 | (1849-1946) | 9, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23 |
| Baldwin County Museum | 11 | Comings, Samuel Huntington | 19 |
| Baldwin County Regional Library Association | 17 | Conn, Mrs. E. E. | 22 |
| Bancroft, Della K. | 18 | Connecticut Valley Museum | 11 |
| Bancroft, George M. | 19 | Connolly, Mrs. E. G. | 21 |
| Barger, Joseph | 22 | Contributions | 6, 10, 14, 16, 18, 22, 25 |
| Bay Minette, Alabama | 12, 17 | Cope, N. M. | 18 |
| Beaty, Elynn B. | 12, 21 | Corte, A. A. | 22 |
| Bell, Miss E. Weaver | 19 | Coutant, Mrs. Ila W. | 19 |
| Bellangee, James (1844-1915) | 18, 19 | Cravath, Mrs. L. S. | 20 |
| Bemis, Mrs. M. E. | 19, 21 | Crawford, Frances Gaston | 21, 23 |
| Bernhardt, Laura (Mrs. Laura Allen) | 23 | Cromwell, Charles T. | 23 |
| Biloxi, Mississippi | 12 | Crosby, Archibald | 19 |
| Bennett, Edith C. | 21 | Cross, Captain J. R. | 20 |
| Birmingham, Alabama | 12 | Cultural Advances | 9, 14 |
| Bishop, David | Cover | Curtis, Mrs. Lenora | 19 |
| Bishop, Henry G. | Cover | | |
| Bishop, L. O. | 20 | Damerow, Clara | 22 |
| Bishop, Mary (Gulledge) | 13, 19, 23 | Damerow, Edna | 22 |
| Black, Mrs. Frances | 23 | Daphne, Alabama | 11 |
| Blake, Marion E. (Mike) | 22 | Davis, S. L. | 22 |
| Book Auctions | 3 | Davis, Mrs. S. L. | 22 |
| "Book Fair" | 26 | de Coudres, Mrs. Frank | 20 |
| Box, Sam E. | Cover | Deese, Ollie E. | Cover |
| Braune, Anna | 13, 15, 19, 23 | Discussion Groups | 5 |
| Brothers, Charles A. | 19 | Dorchester, W. H. | 20 |
| Brown, Mrs. A. C. | 21 | Dougherty, Mrs. E. G. | 19 |
| Brown, F. H., Jr. | 21 | Draughon, Clyde | 22 |
| Brown, Frank L. | 18, 19 | Durham, Frances | 23 |
| Brown, Mrs. Minnie (F. L.) | 18, 19, 21 | Dyson, Helen | 19, 21 |
| Brown, Ralph H. | 19, 21 | Dyson, Margaret (Mrs. Marmaduke) | 18, 21, 23 |
| Brownell, Mrs. Baker | 22 | Dyson, Marmaduke | 15, 19 |
| Bryan, Alice C. | 20 | Dyson, Miss Mary | 22 |
| Bunnel, Margaret C. | 22 | Dyson, Miss Rita | 22 |
| | | Dyson, Sam | 19 |
| Caffee, Mrs. Gay | 25 | | |
| Caldwell, Miss Daisy | 19 | East, Mary Cameron | 27 |
| Call, Helen | 21 | Eastern Shore Art Association | 14 |
| Call, William | 18 | Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay | 2, 5 |
| Carr, Mrs. Roland P. | 13, 23 | Ebel, Earnest | 21 |
| Carvey, Helen | 23 | Emory University | 12 |

| INDEX ENTRY | Page | INDEX ENTRY | Page |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Fairhope, Alabama | 17 | Howland, Marie | |
| "Fairhope Courier" | 5 | (1834-1921) | 3-10, 18-21, 23 |
| "Fairhope Free Library" | 2 | Huelsbeck, Harry | 22 |
| Fairhope Library | | Huelsbeck, Inez | 22 |
| Board | Cover, 10, 11, 16, 21, 24, 25 | Huffman, John S. | 21 |
| Farnell, Mrs. E. W. | 19 | Hurricane of 1906 | 7 |
| Feathers, Robert | 26 | | |
| Fels, Joseph (1853-1914) | 8, 18 | Intellectual Life | 2, 3, 5, 14 |
| Fels Naptha Soap | 8 | Irons, Mrs. G. E. | 23 |
| Ferm, Alexis C. (1870-1971) | 23, 25 | Ives, Georgiana T. | 23 |
| Fink, Julia | 23 | | |
| Florence, Italy | 14 | Jeffcott, Ruth | 13, 19, 23 |
| Foley, Alabama | 17 | Jefferson County, Alabama | 15 |
| Fort Morgan Museum | 11 | Jennings, Bart, Jr. | 21 |
| Frederick, Esther | 23, 25 | Jennings, Beverly | 21 |
| Freeman, Mrs. L. C. | 20 | Johnson, Axil | 19 |
| "Friends of The Library" | 25, 26, 27 | Johnson, Dave | 22 |
| Fugard, Mrs. John III | 26 | Johnson, J. F. | 19 |
| Fulghum, Kenneth | 22 | Johnson, Mrs. J. F. | 19 |
| Fuller, Mrs. George B., Sr. | 20 | Johnson, Marietta L. (1864-1938) | 7, 21 |
| Fuller, Patricia (Mrs. George) | 20 | Josephson, Axel G. S. | 16, 19 |
| | | Josephson, Lucia (1876-1929) | 16 |
| Garden Clubs | 14 | | |
| Gaston, Arthur Fairhope | 21 | Kamper, Henry P. | 21 |
| Gaston, Ernest B. | | Kendrick, Mrs. C. C. | 22 |
| (1861-1937) | 2, 5, 10, 18, 20, 21 | Kile, Mrs. W. W. | 20 |
| Gaston, Dr. Cornelius A. | 17, 18, 21 | King, Julius | 25 |
| Gaston, James E., Jr. | 19 | Kinney, Charles A. | 16, 17, 19 |
| Gaston, Mrs. James E., Sr. | Cover, 17, 19, 20, 25 | Knips, Emil | 19 |
| Gaston, Mary | 21 | Knowles, George | 19 |
| Gaston, Olive "Piney" Wood (Mrs. James E., Sr.) | Cover, 17, 19, 20, 25 | Kutack, Jason | Cover |
| Gelink, W. J. | 19 | | |
| George, Henry (1839-1897) | 5, 7, 15 | LaCoste, Ann | 22 |
| Gessler, Dr. and Mrs. W. F. | 21 | Lambert, Dr. Raymond | 17, 19 |
| "Gilmer, Mrs." | 12 | Lang, George B. | 2 |
| Gooding, Miss Mary | 20 | LaPierre, Etta K. | 21 |
| Government Assistance | 12, 17 | Latent Talent | 14 |
| Grange Movement | 4 | Lee, Mary Heath | |
| Grassfield, Mrs. P. A. | 21 | (1871-1961) | 9, 11, 12, 13, 18, 20, 21, 23 |
| Grey, W. | 20 | Lee, Mildred | 9, 19, 23 |
| Gulledge, Mary Bishop | 13, 19, 23 | Leipzig, Germany | 3 |
| | | Lemon, Francis | 19 |
| Hammonton, New Jersey | 4 | Lessees, Colony Land | 6, 16, 25 |
| "Hard Times" | 25 | Library Association | 10, 11 |
| Harrell, Mrs. C. D. | Cover | Library Building | 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15 |
| Harvard University | 3 | Library Funeral | 10 |
| Harwell, Converse | 27 | Library Personnel | 23 |
| Harwell, Edith | 23 | Library Scrap-Books | 18 |
| Heath, R. N. | 22 | Librarians | 18, 23 |
| Heller, William L. | 19, 20 | Littlefield, C. E. | 18, 20 |
| Higgins, Mrs. F. L. | 20, 21 | Littlefield, Mrs. C. E. | 19 |
| Higgins, Rev. F. L. | 18, 20 | Livingston, Alabama | 15 |
| Historical Records | 22 | London, England | 3 |
| Hjellum, Madge | 23 | Longfellow's Poems | 7 |
| Horning, F. L. | 20 | Los Angeles, California | 16 |
| Howarth, A. R. | 19 | Lundgren, Mrs. Elsa | 25 |
| Howland, Edward (1832-1890) | 3, 4, 21 | Lyon, Miss Frances H. | 19 |
| "Howland's Letters, Mrs." | 5 | Lyon, Townsend P. | 19, 21 |
| | | | |
| | | McCall, Tess S. | 20 |

| INDEX ENTRY | Page | INDEX ENTRY | Page |
|-----------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| McCoy, Mrs. Earl | 25 | Quarles, Mary (1887-1963) | 9, 19, 20, 23 |
| McLean, Mrs. J. E. | 21 | | |
| McNulty, Mamie R. | 21 | Randolph, William H., III | 22 |
| | | Randolph, Mrs. William H., III | 22 |
| Manley, Miss Grace | 19 | Reeves, Admiral J. W., Jr., | 22 |
| Martin, Miss Mary | 23 | Riesenfeld, John | 26, 27 |
| Mask, Marie L. | 20 | Riley, Mrs. Frances W. | 19 |
| Meinema, Iris | 22, 23 | Ring, Mrs. H. F. | 19 |
| Melville, Alex J. | 19, 20 | Roberts, Mildred (Mrs. E. J.) | 19, 21 |
| Memorial Bequests | 16, 21, 22 | Robertsdale, Alabama | 17 |
| Mercer, Geneva | 14 | Rockwell, Helenbell | 23 |
| Mershon, Arthur H. | 19 | Rockwell, Oliver M. | 15, 19 |
| Mershon, Mrs. A. H. | 19 | Rockwell, Reuben L. | 19, 22 |
| Mershon, Bertha | 12, 19, 23 | Rose, F. W. | 18, 19, 20 |
| Mershon, Clarence L. | 18 | Rowe, Dr. W. H. | 19 |
| Mershon, Nathaniel | 18, 20 | Ruge, Esther | 21 |
| Mershon, Mrs. Ronald B. | 21, 25 | Ruge, Howard | 21 |
| Minnich, Emma G. | 21 | | |
| Mobile Bay | 5 | Sandt, Mabel | 23 |
| Mobile, Alabama Library | 2 | "Saturday Press, The" | 3 |
| Monley, Emily | 26 | Schindler, Mrs. Isabelle | 19 |
| Moore, Mrs. Byrd L., Jr. | Cover | Schneider, Joe | 21, 23 |
| Moore, Marie | Cover | Schneider, Mrs. Joe | 21 |
| Mooreman, Clara | 21 | School, Public | 3, 7 |
| Morris, William R. F. | 22 | Schramm, Emma | 21 |
| Municipal Operation | 16, 18, 24 | Schroder, W. H. | 22 |
| Museum, Baldwin County | 11 | Schwab, Mrs. Raymond | 26 |
| Museum, Connecticut Valley | 11 | "Scrap-books, Library" | 18 |
| Museum, Fort Morgan | 11 | Shappley, Mrs. Nolan | 23 |
| Museum, A Pioneer | 11 | Shimer, Louise | 26 |
| | | Shimer, Richard | 26 |
| Nelson, N. O. | 18 | Shine, Mrs. Paul | 26 |
| "Newspaperwoman" | 5 | Shull, Barney L. | Cover |
| New York, N. Y. | 3 | Signal Mountain, Tennessee | 12 |
| Nichols, Martha | 23 | Sinaloa, Mexico | 4 |
| Nichols, Marvin | 17, 19, 21 | "Single Tax" Colony | 5, 8, 16, 17, 18, 25, 27 |
| Nix, James P. | Cover | Single Tax Lessees | 6, 16, 25 |
| | | Sintz, Edward | 26 |
| Organic School of Education | 7 | Smith, Truman | 26 |
| Owen, Albert K. | 4 | Soto, Dom | 26 |
| Oxford, England | 3 | Soto, Mrs. Donna | 23 |
| | | Southeastern Library Association | 12 |
| Paris, France | 3 | "Special Collections" | 14 |
| Paton, James S. | 18, 19, 20 | Staples, A. C. | 20 |
| Patterson, J. A. | 19, 21 | "Stapleton's Pasture" | 2 |
| Payne, Hazele W. | 21, 23 | Stewart, Clara A. | 21 |
| Peavy, Charles | 23 | Stimpson, William | 18, 19 |
| Peck, Marie L. | 23 | St. Pierre, Rev. R. A. | Cover |
| Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | 8 | Sumner, W. S. | 19 |
| "Pied Piper of Hamlin" | 14 | Sumner, Mrs. W. S. | 19 |
| Pilcher, George M. | 18 | Sweet, W. E. | 19 |
| Pilcher, J. M. | 19 | Sweet, Mrs. W. E. | 19 |
| Pioneer Librarian | 7 | Swift, Mrs. A. | 19 |
| "Poor Man's Effort" | 2 | Sykes, Carrie P. | 18 |
| Powell, R. F. | 19 | | |
| Powell, Mrs. R. F. | 18, 19 | | |
| Prang, Louis | 21 | Taylor, Mrs. Helen | 22 |
| Prang, Mrs. Louis | 21 | Taylor, Lloyd | 26 |
| Price, W. L. | 18 | Taggart, Miss Helen | 20 |
| "Progress and Poverty" | 7 | Tax Deduction | 26 |

| INDEX ENTRY | Page |
|--|------------|
| Teikari, Mrs. Jacob (Ruth Jeffcott) | 13, 19, 23 |
| Topolobampo, Mexico | 4, 5 |
| Totten, Lillian B. | 17, 19, 21 |
| Trenholme, Arthur K. | 18, 19, 20 |
| Tutwiler, Julia | 15 |
| Tuveson, Elof | 23 |
| Twenty-Fifth Anniversary | 12 |
| | |
| Unger, Mrs. P. S. M. | 19 |
| U. S. Internal Revenue | 26 |
| Utopian Schemes | 4 |
| | |
| Van Horne, Mrs. | 21 |
| Vinci, Helena | 23 |
| Volunteers Workers | 8, 9, 18 |
| Vredenburg, Mrs. A. G. | 20 |
| | |
| Walker, Clarissa | 20 |
| Walter, Mrs. R. H. | 23 |
| Warren, Fiske | 23 |
| Watros, Milton V. | 21 |
| Wharton, Kirby | 19, 21 |
| Wheeler, Lyndon | 21 |
| White, Mrs. Clara | 19 |
| Whitehead, Elizabeth | 16 |
| Whitman, Walt | 3 |
| Whittier, A. N. | 18 |
| Wickersham, Margot | 27 |
| Wilcox, Ida | 21 |
| Wilcox, Lucian T. | 21 |
| Williams, E. L. | 19 |
| Willy, Carrie E. | 21 |
| Wolchina, Mrs. Melinda | 26 |
| Wolcott, E. C. | 18, 21 |
| Wolcott, Lenore M. | 19, 20 |
| Wolf, Alfred J. | 19 |
| Wood, Emma L. | 20 |
| Wood, Rev. George W. | 10 |
| Woodbury, Charles P. | 22 |
| Woodbury, Elenor | 22 |
| Woodruff, William | 23 |
| W. P. A. Program | 12 |
| Writers | 5, 14 |
| | |
| Zepp, William H. | 19 |

What Is This "Single Tax"?

The basic principle of the Single Tax is that all men are equally entitled to the use of the earth, and the Single Tax as proposed by Henry George, is the method of securing that right by placing a "single tax" on the land values created by the community. If the land has no value, there are no taxes.

The Fairhope, Alabama Single Tax Colony pioneers, few in number and feeble in purse, were imbued with the idea that the most potent educational force they could use in demonstrating the Single Tax theory would be to present an example, set a precedent. This they have been doing for four score years!

City of Fairhope, Alabama

1974

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